

APPEARED
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Casey's point

The Democratic Congress promises to drop a big protectionist package on President Reagan's desk any week now. They'll pay in 1988, but who knows how much damage will be done in the meantime? Special interest politics turns out to be the "new idea" the Democrats have been promising for so long.

Protectionism, harmful to most, is good news to the anti-competitors in this country. Fat cats purr loudest when the door is shut on foreign producers. That's not all. Moscow likes protectionism too. It makes their work easier for them.

Protectionists weave economic basket cases, and a country crippled by trade restrictions, such as the Philippines, is ripe for Communist subversion. The Democrats will point out that they shower millions in economic aid on Third World nations, but this doesn't begin to match the losses protectionism invariably bring. As South Korea has proven beyond a doubt, the best way to achieve prosperity is to go it alone.

CIA chief William Casey made the same point the other day at the Leadership Conference of the Center for the Study of the Presidency. "The Soviet Union may have a

proven recipe for subversion and an undiluted willingness to use raw power to shore up its unpopular clients," he said. "But we in the West have an infinitely more powerful weapon — the promise of long-term prosperity."

That promise is broken when Washington politicians restrict free markets. As with South Africa, the best way to promote peace and prosperity is to encourage economic growth, not destroy it. As with South Africa, the Democrats play domestic politics to the detriment of the poor.

President Reagan will be forced to veto protectionist bills, causing the Democrats to bash him for being "insensitive to the needs of American workers." Mr. Reagan will need to make several points: restrictions helped bring on our most severe depression, they favor the strong over the weak, and they create higher consumer prices.

These dissents will make good campaign slogans in 1988. But it's unfortunate that the Democrats don't realize that protectionism starts many more fires than it extinguishes. Before it's over, many people will get burned, here and abroad.